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With  
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Compliments*

THE  
Blackstone Family:  
BEING SKETCHES,  
BIOGRAPHICAL AND GENEALOGICAL,  
OF  
WILLIAM BLACKSTONE,  
AND  
HIS DESCENDANTS.

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[SARGENT, LUCIUS MANLIUS]

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Norwich, Conn.  
COURIER OFFICE,  
1857.



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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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The following sketches of William Blackstone—"the first Christian Inhabitant of Boston"—and of his descendants, were originally published in the Boston *Evening Transcript* during the year 1849, by Mr. L. M. SARGENT, under the title of "*Auld Lang Syne*," and over the signature of "SAVEALL." They are now brought together and republished in the present form by LORENZO BLACKSTONE, of Norwich, son of Hon. James Blackstone, of Branford, for the gratification of the family circle.



## THE BLACKSTONE FAMILY.

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### N O. I.

Who was William Blackstone? The answer is meagre, but highly interesting to us, indwellers here. He was the first white man who made this peninsula his home, and, as we believe, about 224 years ago. He preceded Isaac Johnson and the company from Charlestown, in his occupancy, five or six years. Referring to Edward Johnson's "Wonder Working Providence," for the first part, and to the early records of Charlestown, for the last part of the statement, Prince says, I. 241—"On the South side of Charles River Mouth, on a Point of Land called Blaxton's point, lives Mr. Blaxton: where He only has a Cottage." Edward Johnson wrote of what he saw—of events which were passing before him. His history extends "from the yeere 1628 to the yeere 1652." I like the very words of an old historian: Johnson says, chapter 17—"One (on) the South side of the River, on a Point of Land called Blaxton's point, planted Mr. William Blaxton." He is writing under date 1630.

This point, according to Hist. Coll., III. 241, and Snow, p. 52, is the same laid down, in ancient plans, as Barton's Point, and is the point where Craigie's bridge commences. Barton's Point is laid down in Bonner's plan of 1722.

Mr. Savage, who cannot be overpraised for his edition of Winthrop's History of New England, conceives, justly, as I think, that Blackstone removed from Boston in 1635, and quotes Thomas Lechford, who lived in Boston, from 1638 to 1640, when he returned to London, and, in 1641, published his Plain Dealing, as saying—"One Mr. Blackstone, a minister went from Boston, having lived there nine or ten years, because he would not join with the church." Of course, if he removed in 1635, and had lived there nine or ten years, his first arrival must have occurred about 1625-6.

Snow, p. 51, believes that Blackstone came over with Endicott, and quotes Hubbard, as confirming that opinion. But Prince, I, p. 174, quoting Mass. Col. Records, says—"1628, June 20, Capt. JOHN ENDICOTT, with his Wife and Company This Day sails in the ship Abigail, Henry Gauden, Master, from Weymouth, in England, for Nahumkeag, in New England." And Sept. 13, he writes of his safe arrival. If Lechford is accurate, Blackstone did not arrive with Endicott. But Lechford's phraseology, "nine or ten" years, is loose; and Hubbard's confirmation is not always to be relied on.

Snow quotes Hubbard, as saying that Blackstone "began to hew stones in the mountains, wherewith to build, but when he saw all sorts of stones would not suit in the building, he betook himself to till the ground, wherein, probably, he was more skilled, or at least had a better faculty ; retaining no symbol of his former profession but his canonical coat." Verily, these are the words of surliness : so thinks the author of the General Hist. of N. E. Hist. Coll, XV, 113. All this Hubbard takes, almost literally, from Edward Johnson's Wonder Working Providence, chapter IX. Johnson says, in the Spring of 1629—"All this while little likelihood there was building the Temple for God's worship, there being only two that began to hew stones in the mountains, the one named Mr. Bright, and the other Mr. Blaxton, and one of them began to build, but when they saw all sorts of stones would not fit in the building, as they supposed, the one betook him to the Seas againe, and the other to till the Land, retaining no simbole of his former profession but a Canonick Coate." Francis Bright, Davenport's pupil, the first minister of Charlestown, Allen says, came over with Mr. Higginson, and returned in about a year after. Prince I, 188, says Mr. Higginson arrived June 24, 1629, "at Naumkeak, which they now name Salem."

Although the precise date of Mr. William Blackstone's arrival cannot be ascertained, and nothing is

known of his parentage, it will be an easy matter to show, that his motives for coming here were the same that drove our forefathers hither from their native land—that he was a religious and a literary man—of correct, industrious, and thrifty habits—of kind and philanthropic feelings—and far more justly entitled to a *monumentum ære perennius*, for having demonstrated the White man's ability to live in peace, for years, single handed and alone, with the Red man, on this little peninsula, than those uncompromising pioneers who hung old women for the "*most nefarious*" crime of witchcraft—quakers for the glory of God—and murdered *salvages*, because they would not do that very thing, which the British Government declares to be impossible—shift their allegiance from their respective Sachems, to the Sachem in London.

## NO. II.

Cotton Mather, in his *Magnalia*, Vol I, p. 221, observes—"There were also some godly Episcopalians; among whom has been commonly reckoned Mr. Blackstone, who, by happening to sleep first in an hovel upon a point of land there, laid claim to all the ground, whereupon there now stands the metropolis of the whole English America, until the inhabitants gave him satisfaction. This man was indeed of a particular humor, and he would never join himself to any of our

churches, giving this reason for it : I came from England because I did not like the lord bishops ; but I can't join with you, because I would not be under the Lord Brethren." Lechford, as quoted by Mr Savage, in Winthrop, I, 45 says of Blackstone, after his removal to Rhode Island, "he lives near Mr Williams, but is far from his opinions."

Mather's statement of Blackstone's claims to the whole ground of the peninsula appears to me to be "*most nefarious*." In the first place, what Mather calls a *hovel*, the Charlestown records, Holmes, Prince, and others call a cottage. In the second place, there was no *happening* about it. Blackstone slept there *on purpose*, not merely *first*, but for *years*. He built his cottage, or procured it to be built ; he cultivated the soil, and made improvements. But where is the evidence, that Blackstone set up this extensive claim, excepting in this sweeping assertion of Cotton Mather's who was not born till 33 years after the settlement of Boston, and whose assertion has been too readily adopted, by subsequent writers? "Mr Blackstone's self interest," says Snow, page 31, "did not stifle his feelings of humanity ; and, though he might claim the peninsula for his property, as having been the first Englishman that slept upon it, he communicated to the Governor the information, that he had found an excellent spring, on his side of the river, and urged him with pressing invitations to remove thither."



This statement is fully sustained by the Charlestown records, referred to by Prince, Vol I, 224. A similar statement is made by Allen. If any unjust or unreasonable claim had been set up, by Blackstone, it would scarcely have escaped Edward Johnson, who was upon the spot, and as we have seen, disposed to speak rather coarsely of Blackstone's *canonicall coate*, partly, no doubt, on account of its episcopal trimmings. I find nothing, in Mr. Savage's Winthrop, that favors Cotton Mather's statement ; which certainly conveys the idea that Blackstone was importunate, and persisting in a very extravagant and unreasonable claim. The very opposite impression has come down to us.

In an account of Providence, published first, in 1765, and ascribed by Allen and others to Stephen Hopkins, governor of R. I, and republished in Mass. Hist. Coll. XIX, 166, the writer says some things, which show, that, whatever the claims of Blackstone were, they were, in the opinion of some judicious persons, based upon something better than "*happening to sleep first in an hovel on a point of land.*"—"He was a man of learning and had received Episcopal ordination in England, and seems to have been of the Puritan persuasion and to have left his native country for his nonconformity ; at what time is quite unknown ; but, when the Massachusetts colony first came to America, they found him set-

tled, on that peninsula, where the town of Boston now stands : he had been there so long as to have raised apple trees and planted an orchard. Upon his invitation, the principal part of that colony removed from Charlestown thither, and began the town on the land he so generously gave them for that purpose." Holmes says, I, 256—" There lived at that time, in a solitary cottage, Mr. Blackstone, an Episcopal minister, who, going to Charlestown, at this juncture, informed the Governor of an excellent spring of water at Shawmut, and invited him over to his side of the river." As he was the first inhabitant, so he was the first admitted freeman, as appears by the Colony Records, May 18., 1631.

In the account of Providence, Gov. Hopkins says, " It was not long before a new kind of nonconformity obliged him to leave the remainder of his estate, on that renowned peninsula, to these numerous new comers, and to remove a second time into the wilderness. Our Puritan fathers were very set in their way; and Blackstone, like John Milton, had doubtless, some peculiar notions on the subject of religion. Some inkling of his feelings may be gathered from the words, quoted by Mather, relative to the *Lord bishops* and *Lord brethren*. He probably felt that his personal comfort would be increased by a removal from Boston.

There is no evidence, however, that he was persecuted, or molested.

"That he was unjustly driven away," says Mr. Savage, in W. 45, "is an opinion, not to be entertained for a moment. As all the right of soil, which the company at home could give, was, by the charter given to our Governor and Company, we shall be convinced of the equity of their treatment, by reading their records, I. 97. At a Court, 1 April, 1633, "It is agreed, that Mr. William Blackstone shall have fifty acres of ground set out for him, near to his house in Boston, to enjoy forever."

This was done, I presume, in that spirit of fair dealing which actuated those who came to Copp's Hill from Plymouth, Sept 19, 1621, when they "*contented*" the poor squaw for her lobsters. William Blackstone deserved this liberality—he had lived upon the spot, for years—he had built a cottage, and made improvements—he had, doubtless, created a favorable *prestige*, for those who came after, by cultivating a relation of peace and friendship with the natives—and he kindly and courteously exhibited the advantages of the peninsula, and waited on the Governor, "*withal inviting and enticing him thither.*"—William Blackstone deserved it all. But he did not deserve the snarling and ill-natured fling contained in the words of Cotton Mather.



## NO. III.

It would be a pleasing thing to be able to put one's foot upon a particular spot, in this peninsula, and, while standing there, to say verily—if *the ridge pole of William Blackstone's cottage were now, where it was, in 1630, it would be over my head!* This cannot be. But I have not a doubt, as to the location of Blackstone's *orchard*, and those *six acres*, which he reserved, when he sold his forty-four other acres, in 1634, on which *six acres*, according to the celebrated deposition of Odlin and others, Blackstone's "*then dwelling house stood.*"

Snow, in his very respectable history of Boston, page 52, says—"Blackstone cultivated with success the *six acres*, which he retained, and soon had a *garden plot and an orchard near his cottage and spring.* These we take to have been situated in the neighborhood of the present Alms House." Snow's book was published in 1825, in May of which year, the Alms House in Leverett street, to which he refers, was taken down.

In this surmise, as to the location of Blackstone's orchard and garden, Snow was certainly mistaken. It is true, Edward Johnson's words, already quoted, show that—"on a point of land, called *Blaxton's Point*, planted *Mr William Blaxton.*" But it does not necessarily follow, that his cottage stood on the *very point*, or even within a few rods of it. It is not denied, that the *very*

*point*, laid down on Bonner's and other ancient plans, as *Barton's Point*, was *Bluxton's Point*." Persons, living miles off from certain headlands or *points*, are often described, as dwellers *on* those *points*. Familiar illustrations are at every one's command. Persons, residing at a great distance from the extremity of *Eastern Point*, in Gloucester, are said to live, *on Eastern Point*.

With the assistance of my friend, N. I Bowditch, Esq. and the aid of Bonner's plan of 1722, Price's plan, dedicated to Gov. Belcher in 1733, and a plan annexed to the first Boston Directory of 1789, I think I shall be able to conduct the reader to Blackstone's *orchard and garden*.

In Suff. Reg. B. 26 , p. 84, will be found the deposition of Anne Pollard aged 89, showing, that William Blackstone sold the *six acres*, by him reserved, in 1634, to Richard Pepys. Anne Pollard's deposition was taken, Dec 26, 1711. Being then 89, she was 13, in 1635, when Blackstone left Boston. The time of sale is not stated, and probably was not clearly remembered, by this aged deponent. It might have taken place, at one of his subsequent visits to Boston; he came there to be married, in July, 1659. Anne Pollard, wife of William, died Dec 6, 1725. A portrait of her, taken, when she was more than one hundred, is in the hall of the Mass. Historical Society.

A deed in fee, dated April 14, 1676, is recorded, B. 9, p. 325, by which Peter Brackett and Mary his wife, late widow of Nathaniel Williams, in consideration of natural love to Nathaniel Williams and Mary Viall, children of said Mary, by her first husband, convey to them, three fourths to Nathaniel, and one fourth to Mary, "all that messuage, with the barnes, stables, orchards, gardens, and also that *six acres of land, be it more or less*, adjoining and belonging to said messuage, called the *Blackstone lot*, being the same, which were conveyed to said Nathaniel, by Richard Pepys, of Ashon, Essex Co., and Mary his wife, as by their act, bearing date Jan. 30, 1655, will more fully appear."

So far, the title stands thus: Boston to Blackstone April 1, 1633, 50 acres. The following year, according to Odlin's deposition, Blackstone to the inhabitants, 44 acres. At some time unknown, according to Anne Pollard's deposition, Blackstone to Pepys the 6 acres reserved. Pepys to Williams, senior, Jan. 30, 1655, the same 6 acres. Mary Bracket, late widow of said Williams, by the joint deed of herself and second husband, April 14, 1676, to the two children of her first husband, the same six acres.

Thus far, we have nothing like metes, bounds, or bearings—all which are happily supplied, by the following conveyance. B. 24, P. 103. Nathaniel Williams, (son of Mary Bracket, by her first husband) by deed,

dated Jan. 29, 1708-9, conveys to Thomas Bannister, an orchard and pasture containing six acres more or less, on northwest side of the Common, with the flats; the upland and flats being bounded, northwest by Charles River, or cove, and in part on John Leverett and James Allen, on whom also it abuts on the northeast; bounded east on James Allen, in part, and in part on said Bannister; southerly on the common."

I now request the antiquarian to look at Bonner's plan, of 1722, bearing in mind that Williams conveyed to Bannister "the orchard and pasture, six acres more or less," only fourteen years before. No doubt can exist that these are the six acres of land, be it more or less, called the Blackstone lot, conveyed to Williams and his sister, by Mary Bracket, his mother; he having probably become seized of his sister's fourth, by inheritance or purchase. Now let us walk into Beacon street, on Bonner's plan of 1772. It extended westward only to the present Mount Vernon street, which then did not exist. Thence in a much more northerly direction, it took the name of "Davis's Lane." At the bottom of this lane, we come to a square lot, fenced in and planted with trees, orchardwise, nearly *in ordine, quincunciali*, as commended by Pliny XVII, 15, and practiced at the present day. Near, and southwest of this, is a small plot, also fenced in, not far from the water, marked "garden" on the plan of 1722; and, due

west of this, is a little wharf. There is a small tenement at the S. E. corner of the orchard, and two within the enclosure, south of the garden. All around this lonely establishment, is a wilderness—no other house—no other tree—save the great tree in the Common, and the powder house and watch house there. There are trees, on Bonner's plan, all over the town, but nothing like this—nothing like an orchard. What means this? As to the garden, that is settled, for it is so laid down—and this is certainly an orchard. Whose orchard?

Blackstone's residence, his six acre lot, his orchard, with which he is identified, by all who have written about him, were matters of interest, 76 years after he left Boston; and Anne Pollard's deposition was then taken, only eleven years before the date of Bonner's plan. The orchard clearly existed in 1708, and is then called an orchard, in the conveyance to Bannister. An apple orchard is a long liver. Speaking of the orchard Blackstone planted, after his removal to Rhode Island, Gov. Hopkins says, in 1765, Mass. H, C. XIX, 174, "Many of the trees which he planted about one hundred and thirty years ago, are still pretty thrifty fruit bearing trees." Blackstone's orchard. Pepy's orchard, Williams's orchard, Bannister's orchard being one and the same orchard, on that six acre lot, must have existed, when Bonner's plan was published.

Now for the bounds and bearings. The orchard,



pasture, and flats are described, in the deed of 1708, of Bannister, as lying on the N. W. side of the Common. This is as clear as rock water. The N. W. line of the Common, however, is not defined on Bonner's plan—the Common seems boundless to the eye. Not a line, on that venerable plan, runs down to the water, through the whole extent, from Roxbury to Barton's Point. But, on Price's plan, of 1733, on which the orchard still remains, and on the plan of 1789, referred to above, the land is evidently fenced in, and the little wharf and plot, marked "garden," on Bonner's plan, are made to bound Southerly on the Common; precisely as the Blackstone six acre lot, in the deed to Bannister, bounds, "Southerly on the Common."

On the plan of 1789, "Davis's Lane" was abolished; but the precise figure of the garden and wharf, *in locis nisdem*, are marked down. The six acre lot is said to bound also on Charles river or a cove. So did the land in question, before the creation of Charles street, and the filling up in that neighborhood. What more natural than that Bonner and Price should lay down, on their plans of 1722 and 1735, the orchard and garden of Blackstone, concerning which a deposition had been taken a few years before? Bonner gives us those two trees that stood so long near Bridewell—the gallows fortification—the windmills on Snow's, i. e., Copp's hill, and North of Cambridge-st.—the "Boling Green"—Coal's garden, and other points

of less interest, than the spot where Blaxton planted." If this be not Blackstone's orchard and garden, it is clear that between 1708 and 1722, another orchard grew up, and another garden was laid out in the very place indicated by the boundaries as Blackstone's six acres. If this be not Blackstone's orchard, there is not a vestige on Bonner's plan, of that orchard, conveyed as an orchard only fourteen years before. Look at Bonner's plan, gentle reader, and judge for yourself.

Vive, vale ; si quid novisti rectius isti,

Candidus imperti, si non, his utere mecum.

#### NO IV.

Though I am out, after larger game, I shall not overlook a lark or a squirrel. Anne Pollard is stated, on a card, attached to her potrait, in the hall of the Mass. Hist. Society, to have died Dec. 6, 1725, aged 105; and the potrait to have been taken, when she was 103. Here are two errors, I think, one the natural child of the other. In the New England Courant, from Sat. Dec. 4, to Sat. 11, 1725, published and sold, by Benjamin Franklin, in Union street, is this entry—"Mrs. Anna Pollard, wife of William Pollard, born at Saffron Walden, in the Kingdom of England, died here, Dec. 6, in the 105th year of her age. She has left of her offspring 130." It thus appears that she was not 105 but in her 105th year. This also I be-

lieve to be an error. There are few men, who will not lie a little, when talking about their thermometers or cases of longevity; and I will take Mrs. Pollard's oath, on such a subject, sooner than Benjamin Franklin's word, or the evidence of an anonymous card: She swore solemnly, as we have seen, that she was 89, Dec. 26, 1711, she was therefore born, in 1622, and was, in Dec. 1725, 103. If it is meant, that the portrait was taken two years before her death, it was taken, when she was 101. Let us return to Blackstone.

Mr. Daggett, in his History of Attleborough, page 26, says—"Mr. Blackstone received £30, for his right to the peninsula." This is the Cotton Mather story. These words seem to imply a claim, on Blackstone's part, to the whole peninsula, and an acquiescence, on the part of the Company. He had already received fifty acres, nineteen months before he received the £30, which £30 were paid him, not for his right to the peninsula, but specifically, for 44 of those 50 acres, which 44 he sold to the inhabitants. Look at the records: "1 April, 1633. It is agreed, that Mr. William Blackstone shall have fifty acres set out for him near his house in Boston to enjoy forever." The agreement at a general meeting, that Edmund Quincy and others should assess the rate of £30 to Mr. Blackstone, did not take place, till Nov. 10, 1634. "This



sum," says Mr. Savage W. I, 45, was undoubtedly the consideration of his sale ;" that is, his sale of those 44 acres.

The famous deposition of John Odlin and others shows, that, "in or about 1634," i. e. about a year after the 50 acres were set out to Mr. Blackstone, he sold 44 of those acres to the inhabitants. Had those 50 acres been conveyed to Blackstone, to satisfy a claim, the prudence of the Governor and assistants would have taught them to demand an acquittance. At least, when they recorded the fact, that those 50 acres were set out, they would have stated the object on the record. Nobody ever heard of any discharge from Blackstone to the Company. I have no doubt he said what any man, in his case, would have said—here I am, here are my cottage—my orchard—my garden—here is fine water, and you seem to be thirsty—come over and possess the land—there is room for us all—surely you will not crowd me out. What puritanical Thugs they would have been, if they had not respected the rights of William Blackstone ! I no more believe that he made, and persisted in a sweeping claim to the whole peninsula, than I believe Cotton Mather to be a very great man, or a remarkably luminous writer.

The deposition of Odlin and others is evidently coextensive with something more than the establishment of the facts that Blackstone sold, and was paid

for those 44 acres, "about the yeare 1634." It shows that he released his title to all the lands lying within said neck, excepting the six acres reserved. Why was this deposition taken at all? Why was it delayed till 1684, fifty years after the sale of the 44 acres? Why was it taken then? Blackstone died May 26, 1675, and his wife about the middle of June, 1673. John Blackstone, son of William, a minor, when his father died, was growing up a scapegrace and a prodigal; and I have no doubt that the deposition of Odlin and others was taken, just then, *ex abundanti cautela*, lest some "pettifogger from Furnival's inn," like Morton, as Branford calls him, should put evil thoughts into John Blackstone's head; and to bar all possibility of disturbance from every quarter.

The deposition is an historical curiosity, and I give it, as I find it, in the *Mass. Hist. Coll.* XIV, 202:

"The deposition of John Odlin, aged about Eighty-two yeares, Robert Walker, aged about Seventy-Eight yeares, Francis Hudson, aged Sixty-eight yeares, and William Lytherland, aged about Seventy-Six yeares. These Deponents, being antient dwellers and Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, in New England, from the time of the first planting and Settling thereof and continuing so at this day, do jointly testify and depose that in or about the yeare of our Lord One thousand Six hundred thirty and four, the

then present Inhabitants of said Town of Boston (of whome the Honourable John Winthrop Esq, Governour of the Colony was chiefe) did treat and agree with Mr. William Blackstone for the purchase of his Estate and right in any Lands, lying within the said neck of Land called Boston, and for said purchase agreed that every householder should pay Six Shillings, and the said sume collected was delivered and paid to Mr. Blackstone to his full content and Satisfaction, in consideration whereof hee Sold unto the then Inhabitants and Town, and their heirs and assigns forever, his whole right and interest in all and every of the Lands lying within said Neck, Reserving onely unto him selfe about Six acres of Land on the point commonly called Blackstone's point, on part whereof his then dwelling stood; after which purchase the Town laid out a place for a trayning field, which ever since and now is used for that purpose and for the feeding of cattell. Robert Walker and William Lytherland farther testify, that Mr. Blackstone bought a stock of Cows with the Money he received as above, and Removed and dwelt near Providence, where he lived till the day of his Death. Deposed this 10th of June, 1684, by John Odlin, Robert Walker, Francis Hudson and William Lytherland, according to their respective Testimonie. Be-

fore us, S. Bradstreet, governor. Sam Sewall, Assist.”

In this deposition all Boston is called a Neck of Land. This was common at that time. Roger Clap, who came over in 1630, with John Maverick and John Warham, and was appointed Captain of Castle William, by the General Court, in Aug, 1665, says, Governor Winthrop “liked that plain neck, that was called Blackstone’s Neck, now Boston.”

The following entry appears on the “second surviving page,” as Mr. Savage calls it, of the records—the town records for the first four years are lost—“10 November, 1634, at general meeting upon public notice, it was agreed that Edmund Quincy, Samuel Wilbore, William Balstone, Edward Hutchinson the elder, and William Cheeseborough the constable, shall make and assess all these rates, viz, a rate for £30 to Mr. Blackstone,” &c. However the deposition of 1684 may, by a wary afterthought, have been shaped to comprehend all Blackstone’s possible rights to lands on the peninsula, other than the six acres reserved, no reasonable person can believe that, in 1634, £30 was considered a high price for those 44 acres, and nothing beyond. It was not fourteen shillings an acre, and exactly the price, as we shall show in good time, of two cows at that very period.

Let me here correct an error of S. D. Mass. H. C. XX. 171, who says Blackstone had “a daughter mar-

ried to Mr. John Stevenson." Blackstone had no daughter. S. D.'s mistake arose from the fact, that John Stevenson is called the son-in-law of W. B ; and he was so, inasmuch as he was the son, by her first husband, of the widow Stevenson, whom W. B. married ; see Hist. of Rehoboth, by Bliss, page 12, in note.

## NO. V.

William Blackstone was married, according to the town records of Boston, to Sarah Stevenson, widow, July 4, 1659, by Gov. John Endicott. She died, according to Hist. Coll. XX, 171, in the middle of June, 1673, two years before her husband. He removed from Boston, as nearly as can be ascertained, in 1635. Gov. Hopkins, in his account of Providence, Hist. Coll. XIX, 174, after giving an interesting account of the establishment of friendly relations, between Roger Williams and Cananicus, at Moshasuck, and the settlement of Providence, says, that " William Blackstone came and settled by the side of Pawtucket river near the Sourthern part of that, which is now the town of Cumberland \* \* \* \* \* at this, his new plantation, he lived uninterrupted, for many years, and there again raised an orchard, the first that ever bore apples in the colony of Rhode Island ; he had the first of that sort, called yellow sweetings, that were ever in the

world, perhaps, the richest and sweetest apple of the whole kind ; many of the trees, which he planted, about one hundred and thirty years ago, are still (1765) pretty thrifty fruit bearing trees.

“Mr. Blackstone used frequently to come to Providence, to preach the gospel ; and to encourage his younger hearers, gave them the first apples they ever saw. It is said, that, when he was old, and unable to travel on foot, and not having any horse, he used to ride on a bull, which he had trained and tutored to that use.” In the R. I. Hist. Coll. 203, it is said that he used frequently to preach in Providence and other places adjacent. He was a man of talent ; and, though somewhat eccentric, sustained the character of an exemplary Christian.”

“The place to which he removed,” says a writer, Mass. H. C. XX, 171, “the Attleborough gore of History, fell within the limits of Plymouth Colony, in the records of which Colony we find further memoirs of this respectable and memorable man: this name, however, does not occur in those records, until the year 1661 ; the date of Rehoboth North Purchase, when this remark occurs, in describing the bounds—“From Rehoboth ranging upon Patucket river, to a place, called by the natives Wawepoowseag, where one Blackstone now liveth.” His house was situated near the banks of the river, on a knoll, which he named “Study Hill.”



It was surrounded by a park, which was his favorite and daily walk, for a series of years. \* \* \* \* His death occurred May 26, 1675, having lived in New England about fifty years."

Stranger and sojourner as he was, disease and death found him not unfriended and alone. John Stevenson, his son-in-law, i. e. the son of his wife by her first husband, says the same writer, "received an assignment of his, Mr. Blackstone's, real estate, for his kind care of him in his declining years." About the period of his death, the Indian war of 1675-6 broke out. His house and its contents were burned by the savages. He knew it not—he was sleeping then beneath the sod, near his favorite Study Hill, where "a flat stone marks his grave." An inventory of his lands, goods and chattels may be found in the volume last quoted, page 172, comprising a house, orchard, 260 acres of land, besides two shares, in Providence meadows, and the tract called Blackstone's meadow. His library comprised 186 volumes in different languages. The name, Blaxton, Blackstone, or Blackston, with us, is rare. As we have neither man, woman nor child to claim it, in this metropolis, we have bestowed it upon a street and upon a square; a village of our Commonwealth sustains this memorable name: and the State in which William Blackstone lived, so many years, in peace, and died at last, in favor, as we be-

lieve, with God and man, has preserved his memory by causing a river, as it flows, to bear his unpretending name forever.

*Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

Douglass II, 92, says " This river was so called by the name of Mr. Blackstone, who removed from Massachusetts Bay, and lived in this gore (Attleborough,) upon that river, many years."

We look in vain for the name of Blackstone, in Gorton, Chalmers, or the Biographia Britannica, with one exception—Sir William, the author of the commentaries, who was the son of Charles, the silk mercer, in Cheapside, and grandson of John, the apothecary in Newgate street, London, who descended from a family of that name, in the West of England, at or near Salisbury. From the scarcity of the stock, we may be permitted to conjecture that our lone pilgrim was of the Salisbury origin, and a relative of the Vinerian professor.

A John Blackston is mentioned by Wood, in his *Athenæ*, as deprived, in the time of Elizabeth, *Fasti*, I. 128. Lond 1815. Wood also speaks, *ibid*, p. 207, of Marmaduke Blaxton ; and again, page 223, he says, Marmaduke Blaxton of Queen's Coll. was admitted A. M. July 5th, 1583 ; and that in 1625 he was a dignitary in the Church of Durham. Here is ground for another conjecture. In, or about, that very year our pilgrim is supposed to have arrived in New Eng-



land. There is nothing chronological, therefore, in the way to prevent him from being the relative in some degree of this Marmaduke.

Again ; a writer, " T. D." in Hist. Coll. XX, 170, in note, says, of the name,—“ It is Blaxton, in Prince’s Chronology ;” that writer is neither right nor wrong : Prince spells the word Blaxton twice, Vol I, page 241—Blackston, page 245—Blackstone, Vol II, page 4, following Mass. Coll. Record ; and again page 29. Edward Johnson, in his history, ch IX, at the close, and ch XVII, at the beginning, writes Blaxton. Wood, in his *Athenæ Oxon*, I, 528, speaks of James Blaxton, who translated the history of Larazibo de Tormes, from the Spanish, in 1653. In the old deposition of Odlin and others, 1684, the name is spelt Blackstone. It appears by Mr. Savage’s Gleanings, Hist. Coll, XXVIII, 246, that William Blaxton graduated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, A. B. 1617, A. M 1621. This is undoubtedly our pilgrim.

No doubt can remain that our William’s orthography was Blaxton, for, in addition to the testimony of Mr. Savage, who saw the name thus written on the records of the English college ; Mr. Daggett states, in a note, page 29, to his History of Attleborough, that the original deeds, by which John conveyed the land, that had been his father’s, in Rhode Island, the first of which is dated Sept 10th, 1692, are now (1834) in

the possession of John Whipple, of Cumberland and are signed John Blaxton.

## NO. VI.

As William Blackstone was the first indwelling white man upon this peninsula, so he was the first in Rehoboth, after his removal from Boston, in 1635. He is styled by Mr. Baylies, "the pilgrim father" of both. Mr. Bliss, the historian of Rehoboth, refers to a tradition, in the neighborhood, where Blackstone last resided, that Winthrop and his company, on their first arrival, were disposed to oust him; and that he made an ingenious answer to their claim; and that all this became incorporated into a novel, called the "*Humours of Utopia*." It is clearly better suited to a work of fiction than of fact. Mr. Bliss offers it "but as a tradition;" and proceeds to show its improbability, by referring to the kindness of Blackstone, and the courtesy of the company. All this grows, probably out of Cotton Mather's wild assertion, quite as credible as witchcraft. Concurrent testimony showed that he proclaimed the superior advantages of Shawmut, and freely and earnestly invited and solicited them thither not that he offered to sell his right, or, in any way, resisted or contested their right to occupy. The Indians were all around him, whose rights were certainly as good as his. It seems much more probable, as the idea of keeping the whole peninsula to himself must

have appeared preposterous, that he was willing to propitiate the chief man of fifteen hundred adventurers; for the thought might very naturally have crossed his mind, that they, possibly, in their eagerness to possess, might crowd rather too closely upon his little domain. All this might well coexist with that benevolence of heart, which he manifested upon other occasions.

S. D. in Mass. Hist. Coll, XX, 171, and some others seem to have erred in regard to some points of Blackstone's history. According to Bliss, p. 6, Blackstone called his house "Study Hall" and it was located "near the East bank of the river, a few rods East of a knoll, which, from its being his favourite place of retirement and study, he called Study Hill." Mr. Bliss says, p. 7. "Three apple trees are now (1836) standing, in the South end of Blackstone's meadow, and two of them bear apples. They appear to be very old, but probable grew from the sprouts of those planted by Blackstone."

I should do injustice to Mr Bliss and to the reader, by attempting an abridgement of the following passage on page 6. "It has been stated, by all who have undertaken to describe this retreat of Blackstone, that he built his house on Study Hill. But a single glance, to a person on the spot, would be sufficient to convince him that this must be an

error; for the ascent of the hill or knoll, as it is sometimes called, is so steep, that to have procured wood or water, or water alone, would have been a thing next to impossible. Besides *reductio ad absurdum*, the Whipple family, in whose possession the land has ever remained, since it was sold to them by Blackstone's son, John Blackstone, says that the house was in the meadow, east side of the hill. And the Hon. Judge Dexter, of Cumberland, who resides near the spot, tells me, that, within his recollection, Blackstone's cellar, with the stoning was plainly to be seen; and pointed out to me the spot, about four rods east of the hill, and two east from his grave. His well, with the stoning almost entire, is still to be seen, a few rods south of the cellar and grave, on the second table and meadow." Mr. Bliss, p. 10, says, the grave is not marked by "a flat stone," but by two rude stones of crystalized quartz, at the head and foot.

John Blackstone, son of William, his only child, of whom we have any knowledge, was born at Rehoboth. When his father died, he was a minor. The Plymouth colony records show this entry—"June 1, 1675, Lieut. Hunt, Ensign Smith, and Mr. Daniel Smith are appointed and authorized by the Court to take some present care of the estate of Mr. William Blackstone deceased, and of his son now left by him; and to see that, at the next Court, he do propose a

man to the Court to be his guardian, which, in case he do neglect, the Court will then see cause to make choice of one for him." John, according to Bliss, p. 13, was a fast young man—wasted his property in intemperance and idleness—sold his lands to David Whipple, in 1692—removed to Providence—became a shoemaker—married his wife, Katharine, probably there—in 1713 returned to Attleborough with his wife—was legally warned out of town—removed to the neighborhood of New Haven, where Mr. Bliss says he has been credibly informed there were living, a short time before 1836, a family of that name, having similar peculiarities to those of the pilgrim, especially the love of solitude. He adds the tradition—on dit—that a grandson of William Blackstone was a Lieutenant, and fell at the capture of Louisbourg. Mr. Daggett says, William Blackstone went often to see Roger Williams. Mr. Baylies, in his memoirs of Plymouth Colony, states that Blackstone was "remarkable for his love of children."

#### NO. VII.

Walker and Lytherland, two of the deponents, in 1684, say, that "Mr. Blackstone bought a stock of cows with the money he received." He received £30, "about the year 1634," but, as he had, probably, sold his homestead also, that is the house and six acres, before he removed, in 1635, the avails of that sale

may have been employed in the same way. Otherwise, his stock of cows must have been a very small one; for cows were excessively high, at that time.

The early inhabitants of Boston must have had the blood of Jubal in their veins, who was the father of such as have cattle. Boston, in the olden times, was a cluster of cow yards, public and private. In the early records, TOWN FIELDS are often referred to. In 1635, we read—"Feb. all the fences are to be made sufficient by the seventh of the second month (i. e. April, by the old reckoning) and they to be looked unto, by brother Grubb and Hudson for the new field; brother Penniman and brother Colburn, for the field by him; and by brother Penn and brother Belcher for the fort field; brother Matson and brother Everill at the mill field." In 1636, we read, "March 1. All the fences belonging to the town fields are to be overseen and looked to thus: the field towards Roxbury by Jacob Eliot and Jonathan Negoose; the fort field by James Penn and Richard Gridley; the mill field by John Button and Edward Bendall; and the new field by John Audley and Thomas Fairweather."

I am happy to believe the name of brother Negoose has gone out. The field near Roxbury, says Snow, was the neck; the fort field, the region of fort hill; the mill field, near Copp's Hill, where the wind-mill stood; the new field, the land bought of Blackstone;



and the field by Mr. Colburn, the larger part of the present Common. In 1646, the following regulations were made—"It it is granted, I. That all the inhabitants shall have equal right of commonage in the town: those who are admitted by the town are to be inhabitants. II. It is ordered that all who shall after the date hereof come to be an inhabitant of the town of Boston shall not have right of commonage, unless he hire it of them that are commoners. III. There shall be kept out of the Common by the inhabitants of the town but seventy milch kine. IV. No dry cattle, young cattle, or horse, shall be free to go on the Common, this year, but one horse of Elder Oliver."

These rules were, probably, not very rigidly enforced, two hundred years ago; for, sixty years ago, the cattle and swine found clever pickings, where palaces now stand: indeed *eundo, redeundo, et manendo*, they were all about town. The Common, instead of being the delightful object that it is, with its checkered walks, and costly fountain, and its bands of music, of a summer evening, was crammed with bulls and cows, roaring and bellowing, from morning till night. Frog lane, now Boylston street, taking its original name from those four legged *Prima Donnas*, that occupied the swampy land, between that point and the residence of Dr. Byles, South west of it, was always full of cows. So was Cow lane, now High street; and

Bishop's Alley, now Hawley street. Then—sixty years ago—all the land, between that alley on the Northwest, Milk street on the Northeast, Long lane, now Federal street on the East, Cow lane on the South, and Seven star lane, now Summer street, on the South west, was a large swampy pasture : the lower part of which, whereon part of the Tontine, now Franklin Place, and the theatre were built, was a quagmire. Beacon Hill, Fox Hill, West Hill, and Mount Horam, as Gen. Washington calls it, Sparks III, 305, and their slopes were frequented by cattle. They were numerous, also, in Auchmuty's lane, now Essex street, and in Green's lane, now Atkinson street.

There are many, now living, who have a vivid recollection of Governor Hancock—I do not mean his excellency—but a memorable bull, who had received that sobriquet, and a terrible bull he was. My walk to school was a long one ; and my shortest path being across the Common, to my school house, kept by Oliver Willington Lane, in Staniford street, I never liked to cross until I had ascertained if Governor Hancock, who had lost a horn during the revolutionary contest, were sufficiently far off to justify the adventure.



## NO. VIII.

Daggett says, in his *Hist. of Attleborough*, page 29 — “It is generally supposed by historians, that the family is now extinct. But is it not certain, however, though probable, that the blood of Blackstone runs not in the veins of a single human being. There is some reason to believe, that his son emigrated to Connecticut, and settled on a neck of land, not far from New Haven, where it is possible, some of his posterity may exist in the female line.” Bliss, in his history of Rehboth, p. 13, says of John, the son of W. B. “he afterwards removed, as tradition says, to Connecticut, and settled not far from New Haven.”

The researches of these gentlemen seem not to have been carried to any great length, upon this point.

It occurred to me, that Professor Silliman of New Haven, who knows so much of every thing, worth knowing, might know something of this. I wrote to him accordingly. His very kind and satisfactory reply to my letter is now before me, under date March 23, 1849; from which the following are extracts—“In the town of Branford, ten miles East from New Haven, lives James Blackstone, I suppose a lineal descendant from the primitive man of Boston. His residence is two miles East or South East of Branford village, which is eight miles from New Haven, two miles on the road towards Stony Brook, a watering place on

the sea shore. Mr. Blackstone is a man of great worth and respectability, has often represented his town, in the Legislature, and has been a member of the State Senate. Some of our respectable citizens represent Mr. Blackstone, as both intelligent and kind, and they say, that he is well informed as to his own genealogy." \* \* \* \* "I think you may, without hesitation, address Mr. Blackstone." Professor Silliman adds, that his information was derived from the Hon. Mr. Ingersoll, our late minister to Russia, and others, personally acquainted with Mr. Blackstone."

Upon the strength of this statement, I have addressed several letters to Mr. James Blackstone, from whose replies, bearing date April 2, 10 and 24, in connection with the facts and traditions, stated by Bliss, Daggett, and others, I have arrived at the conclusion that Mr. Daggett is mistaken in the opinion, that "it is probable the blood of Blackstone runs not in the veins of a single human being." I also am of opinion, that, upon a fair examination, very few will doubt, that my correspondent, James Blackstone, Esquire, of Branford, is the gr-gr-gr-grandson of William Blackstone, our Boston pilgrim.

Mr. James Blackstone is now 54 years of age—Timothy Blackstone, his father, who is still living, is 83—John Blackstone, his grandfather, died in Branford, Aug. 10, 1818, aged 87—John Blackstone, his

great-grandfather, died in Branford, Jan. 3, 1785, aged 85 years, 11 months, 15 days.

Thus far all is clear. Here are four generations, John—John—Timothy—James. To my first enquiry Mr. James Blackstone replies—"As it respects my being a decendant of a man named William Blackstone, I have no doubt of that; whether it was the identical one that you allude to, I am not positive; although from all the information that I am in possession of, I have not much doubt of it. I have no testimony in my possession to identify my ancestors any farther back than John Blackstone,"—meaning John Blackstone who died in 1785, and whom Mr. James Blackstone calls "John Blackstone the first;" not being aware of the existence of any other and earlier John Blackstone.

At my request, Mr. James Blackstone has transcribed from the gravestone, in the centre of the yard, in the town of Branford, the following inscription—"In memory of John Blackstone, who departed this life, Jan. 3d, A. D. 1785, aged 85 years, eleven months and 15 days." This John Blackstone could not have been the son of William; for William died in 1675, and this John clearly could not have been born till 1699. My opinion is that he was the son of John Blackstone, whom Bliss, Daggett, and the Old Colony Records refer to, as the son of William.

Daggett says, in his history of Attleborough, p. 20, "William Blackstone left one son, John Blackstone, who, it is supposed, settled some-where near New Haven"—"He lived on his inheritance till 1692, when he sold his lands to David Whipple, and soon after removed to Providence"—"There, it is probable, he married his wife Katherine, and continued to reside, till 1718." There is no chronological reason therefore, in the way of his having been the father of John Blackstone, who was born in 1699, and died in 1785, aged nearly 86 years. John, the son of William, led a wandering life ; and, if my genealogy is correct, the grandfather's thrift, prudence, and industry, as we shall presently see, revived in the grandson, that is, in John, who died in 1785.

It would be very remarkable, if two distinct families, bearing a name then, and even now, so exceedingly rare, should both have settled down so near New Haven: yet tradition says, that William's son John settled there ; and John, who died in 1785, certainly settled there, and lived there, and died there. The identity of the baptismal name is also a slight corroborative. John, the son of William, was poor and shiftless, and nothing is known of his latter days. John, who died in 1785, came first to Branford extremely poor. I now present an interesting extract from Mr. James Blackstone's letter of April 10, 1849. He is speaking of John, his great-grandfather, who

died in 1785. "When he came to Branford, he was entirely destitute of property of any kind; and tradition says, that he left his father's home in England, in consequence of difficulty with his parents about property, and that his father and mother were very partial to a brother-in-law of his. John Blackstone, soon after his arrival in Branford, went to sea, and followed that business for a number of years, and became owner and master of a vessel, and traded at the West India Islands, and in progress of time was the owner of several vessels, which he lost during the French war. He afterwards turned his attention to farming; and, at the time of his death, was the owner of a large landed estate, which has been handed down from father to son to the present generation. I am now living on his old homestead. My house now stands within a few yards of the place where his house stood."

Let us carefully scrutinize this tradition, referred to by Mr. James Blackstone. To the date of his great-grandfather's birth in 1699, it runs back 150 years. Great allowance must be made for the attrition of time. How common it is, when we get among *pro-avi* and *at-avi*, to substitute great-grandfathers for great, great-grandfathers, while reciting traditional stories. Now let us see, if the tradition, which has been vague-

ly applied, for more than a century, in Branford, to some John Blackstone, and, of course, to John, who died in 1785, because they knew no earlier John, will apply to John, the son of William. We know that William came from England, and in early life, for he was here about 1625, and he graduated at Emanuel College, A. B. 1617, and A. M., 1621. Whether any difficulty with his parents mingled with his dislike of the Lord Bishops, to cause his voluntary expatriation, we know not. But his son John, it is more than probable, had "a difficulty with his parents." He also had "a brother-in-law," John Stevenson, to whom his father and mother had certainly the best of reasons for being "very partial." For while we may well suppose, that the vagrant and unthrifty habits, for which their son, John Blackstone, was afterwards noted, were showing their premonitory symptoms of idleness and disobedience, the devotion of his brother-in-law to his venerable parents, was so remarkable, as to obtain for him, after their death, a public notice and remuneration from the Plymouth Court. When W. B. married the Widow Stevenson, her son J. S. was about 14 years old. W. B. had also promised his wife, at the time of their marriage, to provide for this child. Mr. Dagget has transcribed this order of Court, from the Old Colony Records, as follows :

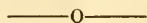
July 10, 1675. "Whereas the Court is informed,



that one, whose name is John Stevenson, son-in-law to Mr. William Blackstone, late deceased, was very helpful to his father and mother, in their life-time without whom they could not have subsisted, as to a good help and instrument thereof, and he is now left in a low and mean condition, and never was in any manner recompensed for his good service aforesaid; and if (as it is said at least) his father-in-law engaged to his mother, at his marriage with her, that he should be considered with a competency of land out of the said Blackstone's land then lived on, which hath never yet been performed: and forasmuch as the personal estate of the said William Blackstone is so small and inconsiderable, that he, the said Stevenson, cannot be relieved out of it: this Court therefore, in consideration of the premises, do order and dispose fifty acres of land unto the said John Stevenson out of the lands of the said William Blackstone and five acres of meadow, to be laid out unto him by Ensign Henry Smith, and Mr. Daniel Smith and Mr. Nathaniel Paine, according as they shall think meet so as it may be most commodious to him, or as little prejudicial to the seat of Mr. William Blackstone as may be. By order of the Court for the jurisdiction of Plymouth." The "*difficulty about property*" was most probably John Blackstone's unwillingness, that

his parent should do justice to John Stevenson, in their life time.

Mr. Daggett had a very imperfect knowledge of the *whole* truth, when, in 1834, he surmises that some of Blackstone's family may exist, near New Haven, in the female line. Mr. James Blackstone says in his letter of April 2, that John Blackstone, who died in 1785, left two sons and two daughters, who lived and died in Branford, and he adds, "There are now five families of Blackstones, living in Branford, and some four or five more in the State of New York, all descendants of John Blackstone."



To the foregoing we append the following extract from a private letter addressed to HON. JAMES BLACKSTONE, by Mr. Sargent. It presents, in a condensed form, the results to which his genealogical investigations had conducted him :

BOSTON, April 16th 1849.

DEAR SIR :

\* \* \* \* \*

I am unable to see any good reason against the following line of descent :

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, the pilgrim.

JOHN BLACKSTONE, his son.

JOHN BLACKSTONE, his son.

JOHN BLACKSTONE, his son.

TIMOTHY BLACKSTONE, his son.

JAMES BLACKSTONE, his son.

\* \* \* \*

If I am correct, instead of being the great, great, you are  
the great, great, great, grandson of William Blackstone.

Truly and respectfully yours,

L. M. SARGENT.

JAMES BLACKSTONE, Esquire.





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